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COMPLETION OF THE WASHINGTON ZONE $-13^{\circ} 50'$ to $-18^{\circ} 10'$.

[Extract from a private letter of Mr. A. N. SKINNER.]

. . . "It may interest you to know that about three years ago I was put in charge of the PISTOR and MARTEN'S Transit-Circle, and ordered to execute the observation of the Gesellschaft Zone $-13^{\circ} 50'$ to $-18^{\circ} 10'$. I entered vigorously upon it at once, and was highly favored in having two competent assistants—FRANK B. LITTELL and THEO. I. KING. The observing was practically finished in two years. I did all the work at the telescope; the assistants recorded and read the microscopes. There are 8689 stars in the Zone. More than 19,000 observations have been made. The reductions are more than half-finished. One minor fruit of the work has been the discovery of four interesting variable stars—X *Hydræ*, W *Ceti*, R. T. *Libræ*, and Z *Capricorni*."

U. S. Naval Observatory,
WASHINGTON, November 11, 1896.

DR. JOHN H. C. BONTÉ (DIED NOVEMBER 24, 1896).

Dr. J. H. C. BONTÉ, Secretary of the University of California during the years 1881-1896, and Professor of Legal Ethics in the Hastings Law School, died in Sacramento, November 24, 1896, at the age of sixty-five years. This is not the place to speak of his long, disinterested, and very valuable services to the University, as its Secretary, Land Agent, and Business Manager. He occupied a difficult position in the midst of conflicting interests, and few will realize to the full the genuine devotion which he brought to his manifold duties.

During the early years of the history of the Lick Observatory, when much was lacking in our equipment, and when the annual appropriations were markedly smaller than at present even, it would have been impossible to have carried on the work of the institution as it has been carried on, had it not been for Dr. BONTÉ's cordial seconding of the plans of the Director, which had been approved by the Chairman of the Regents' Committees on the Lick Observatory and on Finance, but which could only be made effective by the most scrupulously rigid economy.

He took unusual pains to understand what was wanted; and he spared no labor to make it as easy as possible to realize the

ends desired as quickly as practicable, and this in the face of genuine difficulties. Fortunately, the Observatory has passed through its early difficulties with success, and has entered another period, under new and improved conditions. This change was certain to come sooner or later. That it has come quickly is due in an important degree to his friendly co-operation. So much, at the very least, is due from the Observatory to our departed friend. Those who have cheerfully and faithfully borne the burden and heat of the early days deserve the gratitude of those others who will reap the benefit of their labors.

EDWARD S. HOLDEN.

MT. HAMILTON, Nov. 25, 1896.

ASTRONOMICAL TELEGRAMS.

ROTATION-TIMES OF *VENUS* AND *MERCURY*, ETC.

The following telegram appeared in the daily papers of the United States early in October:

LOWELL OBSERVATORY, FLAGSTAFF, Arizona, October 6.—The astronomers here have discovered that the planets *Mercury* and *Venus* each rotates once on its axis during its revolution around the Sun. These planets have therefore only one day in each of their years. *Venus* has a dense atmosphere, while *Mercury* has none.

This telegram omits to state that SCHIAPARELLI announced on December 8, 1889,* that his observations from 1882 onwards led to the conclusion that *Mercury* revolved on its axis once in one period of revolution about the Sun; and that he announced a similar conclusion with respect to *Venus* early in 1890.†

As no telegram relating to these important observations reached the Lick Observatory directly, I applied for a copy of the original sent to Boston, which has been kindly furnished by Mr. RITCHIE, as follows:

(Dated) Lowell Observatory, }
FLAGSTAFF, A. T., October 5, 1896. }

To JOHN RITCHIE, Jr., Boston:

Mercury and *Venus* rotate once on their axes in a revolution round the Sun. *Venus* is not cloud-covered, but atmosphere veiled. *Mercury* not. (Signed) LOWELL.

It thus appears that the original telegram from the Lowell

* See *Publications A. S. P.*, Volume II, page 79. † *Ibid.*, Volume II, page 246.